

gas around said workpieces in a manner such that each respective individual flow of quenching gas around a respective one of said workpieces remains out of contact with the other respective individual flows of quenching gas during its flow around the respective workpiece, wherein each individual flow of quenching gas is substantially laminar due to the absence of turbulence-generating mixing which would otherwise occur if the flows of quenching gas were not prevented from mixing with one another, said means for guiding individual substantially laminar flows of quenching gas including a plurality of guide channels each having a closed lateral surface and being disposable in surrounding relationship around a respective one of said workpieces for directing a substantially laminar flow of quenching gas around the respective workpiece.

18. (New) An apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said guide channels have a length that corresponds at least to a height of individual or stacked ones of said workpieces.

19. (New) An apparatus according to claim 18, wherein the length of said guide channels projects beyond a height of said individual or stacked workpieces by an amount equal to half of a diameter or width of said workpieces.

20. (New) An apparatus according to claim 17, which includes means for displacing said guide channels in said quenching chamber.

91